

USACHPPM

HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

27 February 2003

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information regarding potential strategic or tactical impact to the US Army and as such, should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available at <http://mic.afmic.detrick.army.mil/>. The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Black Death Vaccine Developed

19 February – BBC News reported UK researchers have made a crucial breakthrough in the development of a vaccine against the 'Black Death'. The [bubonic plague](#), which killed millions in Europe in the Middle Ages, is now one of the most deadly toxins available to terrorists. Researchers at the Ministry of Defence's Porton Down laboratory say a vaccine could be licensed "within one to two years". Around 2,500 cases of plague occur naturally each year across the world. It is caused by the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium that can infect rodents. It is usually transferred to humans by fleas. After someone has been infected, symptoms including fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and swollen lymph nodes which ooze blood, develop within two to eight days. If it is untreated, bubonic plague kills around 60% of victims. [View Article](#)

Brain Scans Show Placebo Effect Is All in the Head

19 February – Reuters reported a brain scan study recently published shows the placebo effect is real when it comes to pain. People who believed dummy treatments were fighting their pain showed reduced brain activity in areas known to be involved in feeling pain, researchers at Princeton and the University of Michigan said. "What we have shown here in this study is when the placebo effect occurs, there really is something going on in the brain to reduce sensation," said Dr. Kenneth Casey, a neurologist at the University of Michigan and the Ann Arbor Veterans Affairs Health Care System. The study is in line with other brain research that shows the placebo effect also causes changes in the brains of patients with, for example, depression. The placebo effect is so strong that medical studies usually must include a "placebo arm" to make sure a new drug truly is working through a unique mechanism. An estimated 30 percent of patients with a range of conditions will get better simply from the action of taking a pill, getting a shot or otherwise receiving medical treatment. But if the effects are psychological, they are certainly real. Casey's team has shown that placebos can affect the brain areas that cause the sensation of pain. [View Article](#)

Chemical Turns Stem Cells into Beating Heart Cells

19 February – Science Daily reported scientists have found a way to turn mouse embryonic stem cells into beating heart muscle cells - a result that could lead to the use of embryonic stem cells in cardiac therapy, and possibly even drugs that can prompt the body to regenerate heart cells on its own. The research, which appears in the Feb. 18 print edition of the Journal of the American Chemical Society, tackles a number of the obstacles thwarting practical applications of embryonic stem cells, while also pointing to a viable path around the ethical and political concerns encompassing the debate. Researchers screened a vast library of compounds in search of molecules with the potential to cause stem cells to grow into heart muscle cells. They found four such molecules, which they named

cardiogenol A-D. They tested the cardiogenol compounds by using embryonic stem cells from mice. After seven days growing in a tissue culture dish, the majority of the stem cells were converted into beating cardiac muscle cells. [View Article](#)

Drum Sessions Protect Employees from Burnout

19 February – Reuters reported participating in drumming sessions may help people defend themselves from the stress and burnout that can cause them to leave their jobs, according to the findings of a new study. All study participants were employees at a nursing home, an industry with an unusually high turnover rate. When staffers at one Pennsylvania facility participated in six drumming sessions with their coworkers, however, they experienced nearly a 50-percent improvement in mood, including a decrease in feelings of fatigue, anxiety and depression. Moreover, during the year following the drumming sessions, 49 fewer employees resigned than had the previous year, saving the facility nearly \$400,000 in costs associated with training new hires. These findings suggest that incorporating drumming circles into the lives of employees can be a cost-effective means of helping workers and reducing turnover, both in long-term care and other industries, study author Dr. Barry Bittman said. [View Article](#)

Experts Pick Recipe for Next Flu Vaccine

19 February – CNN News reported a Food and Drug Administration committee decided Thursday to add the [flu](#) strain that caused the most illnesses this year to next year's [influenza vaccine](#). The advisory committee joined the World Health Organization in deciding to add the A-Fujian to the vaccine, which will also contain a second A strain which was in this year's vaccine. The vaccine includes two strains of A-type flu and one of B-type. Tentatively the committee decided to keep the current B-Shanghai in the vaccine. That could change in the unlikely event there is a major outbreak of a type B flu before the committee confirms its action March 17. Complicating the decision this year was confusion over just how well this winter's imperfect vaccine protected people. The committee saw conflicting research Wednesday that indicated a range of results, from no protection to a fair amount. [View Article](#)

Measles Outbreak Casts Doubt on Efficacy of Post Exposure Measles Vaccination

19 February – Eurosurveillance reported a new report has cast doubt on the value of [measles vaccine](#) for post exposure prophylaxis. The new report describes a single case of [measles](#) that occurred recently in a 17 month old non-vaccinated child attending a nursery. The child presented with an erythematous maculopapular rash 72 hours after the onset of the first symptoms (coryza, cough and conjunctivitis). Clinical diagnosis of measles was immediately made and confirmed through laboratory tests a few hours later. The same day, four of the six children who had contact with the case during the coryza period were vaccinated with MMR. Although eligible, none of the six children had been previously vaccinated. Two to three days later, all six developed typical measles that was later laboratory confirmed by IgM detection in oral fluids. Virus strains isolated from the primary case and two of the contacts were of the same genotype. This incident, in which MMR vaccine administered post exposure did not protect, emphasizes the weak evidence in favor of the recommendation, and suggests the control measure should not be relied on in an outbreak situation. [View Article](#)

Protein Helps Mount 'Instant Strike' against Flu Viruses

19 February – Science Blog reported researchers have identified a protein in the immune system that appears to play a crucial role in protecting against deadly forms of influenza, and may be particularly

important in protecting against emerging [flu](#) viruses like the avian flu. The researchers believe that a vaccine made with a live but weakened strain of flu virus – such as the inhaled flu vaccine introduced last year – may activate this part of the immune system and offer the best defense against avian flu. [View Article](#)

Vaccine 'Could Block Lung Cancer'

20 February – BBC News reported experts have developed a vaccine which could be used to block the progress of lung cancer. A small study has suggested it could delay the recurrence of tumors in patients with the most common form of cancer. Doctors said the research, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute was "encouraging". Scientists from the University Medical Center, Dallas, Texas, who carried out the study, said this was the first time a vaccine had been shown to be effective against this type of cancer. The researchers followed 43 patients - 10 who had early stage cancer and 33 who had advanced stage cancer. Surgeons removed their tumors. The patients were then injected with a vaccine that included cells from their tumor and a gene called CM-CSF, which changed the surface of the cells to help the body identify them as cancerous. The body's immune cells then began to recognize, attack and destroy the cancer cells in the lungs. The patients were given an injection of the GVAX vaccine every two weeks for three months. A small number of patients were still free of cancer three years after they were vaccinated. In others, the vaccine appeared to delay the recurrence of cancer for several months. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Disparities in Premature Deaths from Heart Disease --- 50 States and the District of Columbia, 2001

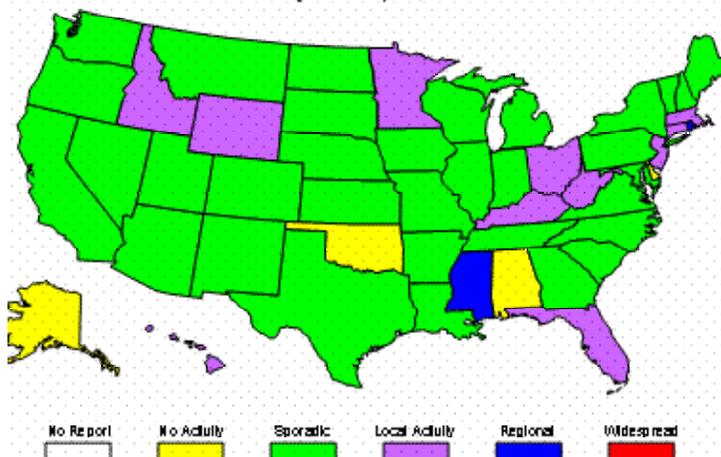
20 February – CDC/MMWR reported in 2001, heart disease accounted for approximately 29.0% of deaths among U.S. residents; 16.8% of those deaths occurred among persons aged <65 years. Although mortality rates from heart disease have decreased, the decline has not been uniform for all populations. One of the two overall national health objectives for 2010 is to eliminate health disparities among different segments of the U.S. population. To better understand these disparities, CDC analyzed death certificate data for premature deaths from heart disease occurring in 2001. The report summarizes the results of that analysis, which indicated that the proportion of premature heart disease deaths varied by state and was higher among blacks, American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs), Asians/Pacific Islanders (A/PIs), and Hispanics. Reducing premature death from heart disease and eliminating disparities will require preventing, detecting, treating, and controlling risk factors for heart disease in young and middle-aged adults. [View Report](#)

Influenza Update

CDC Update

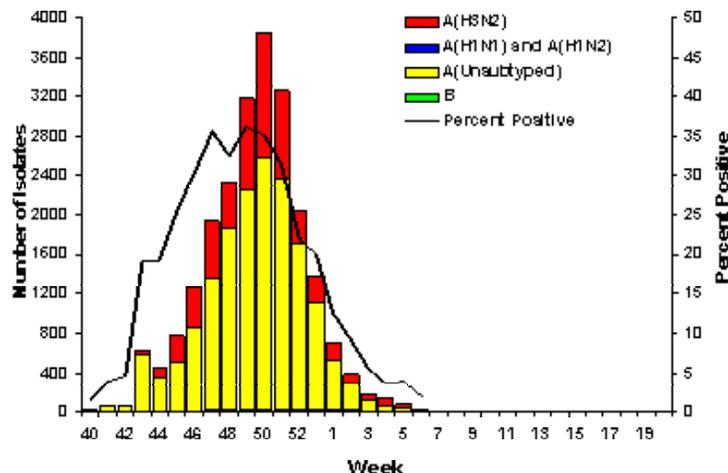
Weekly Influenza Activity Estimates Reported by State & Territorial Epidemiologists

Week ending February 14, 2004- Week 6



[View Source](#)

WHO/NREVSS Collaborating Laboratories National Summary, 2003-04



WHO Avian Influenza Update

23 February – WHO reported to date, Viet Nam has reported 23 confirmed cases, of which 15 have been fatal. Since 23 January 2004, the Ministry of Public Health in Thailand has reported 9 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with H5N1 avian influenza. Of these, seven have died. Highly pathogenic avian influenza, caused by the H5N1 strain, is currently infecting poultry in 8 Asian countries. Full control has not yet been achieved in any of these countries, despite intensive efforts in many. These countries include China, Japan Republic of Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Indonesia and Laos. [View Source](#)

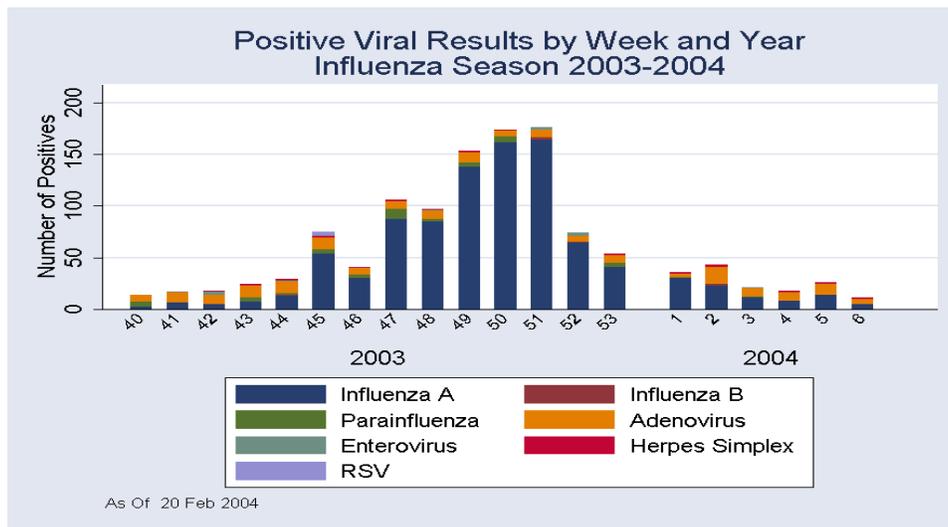
WHO Influenza Update for Epidemiology Weeks 5 and 6

20 February – WHO reported Influenza activity associated with A/Fujian/411/2002-like viruses started to decline and/or remained at a low level in most countries except some in eastern European (Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia). In Asia, where several countries are affected by outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1), A(H3N2) virus was circulating in Japan and Viet Nam, and B virus was circulating in the Republic of Korea, though at low level. In addition, in China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, sporadic cases of A(H3N2), A(H1N1) and B were detected. In Canada during weeks 5 and 6, Quebec reported widespread influenza activity; all other regions reported sporadic or no influenza activity. Of the 651 influenza viruses antigenically characterized, 616 (95%) were A/Fujian/411/2002-like and 25 (4%) were A/Panama/2007/99-like. In Croatia, Influenza A(H3N2) activity has been reported as widespread since week 1. In Czech Republic an increase in influenza A(H3N2) activity was observed in weeks 5 and 6, when regional activity was reported. In Finland a local outbreak of influenza A among conscripts in a garrison was reported in week 6. In Latvia, Influenza activity started to decrease in central and eastern parts of the country, while A(H3N2) activity continued to increase in the western part. In Poland, a significant increase in the number of ILI cases was observed in week 5. In week 6, ILI incidence rate was 120.5 per 100, 000 population. In Republic of Korea, Influenza B activity continued in weeks 5 and 6. [View Source](#)

DoD Global Influenza and Other Respiratory Viral Pathogens Surveillance Weekly Update Week 7 (15 Feb – 21 Feb)

20 February - Since the start of the influenza surveillance season (Week 40: 28 Sep to 4 Oct 03), the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has received 2,746 throat swab specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. 2,695 (98%) of the specimens have been processed to date. Of those processed, 929 (34%) were positive for Influenza A virus and 5 were positive for Influenza B virus.

[View Source](#)



Department of Defense Global Emerging Infections System Report

23 February -INFLUENZA Highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) is widespread in many Asian countries. In contrast, human influenza activity has declined markedly in the past month. To date, 32 human cases of avian influenza have been reported: 9 in Thailand with 7 deaths and 23 in Vietnam with 15 deaths. No human-to-human transmission has been documented. Culling of poultry flocks in affected areas, along with protection of occupationally exposed workers in culling operations, is the most significant prevention measure available. Vaccination of flocks is less effective in preventing spread and not recommended. In the US different types of avian influenza have been reported recently. Poultry in Delaware been infected with by influenza A(H7N2) and culling of flocks is in progress. Texas recently reported A(H5N2) in one flock. Investigation continues in both states but it appears that these are low pathogenicity stains. During this outbreak no human A(H5N1) or A(H7) cases have occurred in the US. Interim CDC guidelines for exposed workers include basic infection control measures, personnel protective equipment, vaccination with this year's influenza vaccine, antiviral drugs daily for workers in direct contact with infected poultry and contaminated surfaces, and enhanced surveillance. The CDC notes that human health risk from low pathogenic avian influenza viruses is less well established and likely to be lower, however they recommend taking all possible precautions to the extent feasible when individuals have contact with birds infected by any avian influenza virus as part of control and eradication activities. Oseltamavir is preferred unless antiviral sensitivities are known since avian influenza has previously demonstrated resistance to amantidine and M2 antivirals. CDC's interim guidance, travel precautions and other relevant information are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>. The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) requested international assistance for the avian influenza outbreak in Asia. Similar to the experience with SARS one year ago, one veterinarian from DoD-GEIS central hub and personnel from overseas labs, AFRIMS in Thailand and NAMRU-2 in Indonesia, are responding cooperatively with WHO and with broad international participation. Other GEIS partners, particularly the DoD

Global Influenza Surveillance Program at AFIOH, are prepared to provide expertise if needed. GOARN will meet with partners, including GEIS, in early March to review and discuss the response to avian influenza. GOARN information is available at <http://www.who.int/csr/outbreaknetwork/en/>. There are no international travel advisories for Avian Influenza or SARS.

USEUCOM

Emergence of a New Community Acquired MRSA Strain in Germany

19 February – Eurosurveillance reported analysis of community-acquired methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* ([c-MRSA](#)) from Germany producing the Panton-Valentine leukocidin revealed a unique Smal-macrorestriction pattern, different from epidemic nosocomial strains. This molecular pattern corresponds to those shown in c-MRSA strains from other countries in the European Union. All isolates exhibited resistance to fusidic acid, which is coded by the far-1 gene. From data on geographical dissemination and time of occurrence, this strain appears to have emerged in Germany in the second half of 2002, and so an already wider dissemination is likely. The emergence of MRSA with resistance to fusidic acid is a first sign of the emergence of a PVL-positive MRSA clone. [View Article](#)

Germany: Virus Infection Closes German Army Bases in Hesse

24 February – ProMed reported a mysterious viral infection has forced military authorities in Germany to close 4 bases, ordering nearly 4000 personnel and their dependents to stay at home, authorities said on Fri 20 Feb 2004. (*NOTE: An early ProMed report mistakenly reported that the closed bases were U.S. Army bases. A correction was issued*). The bases at Schwalmstadt, Schwarzenborn, Stadtallendorf, and Neustadt will be closed for 3 weeks while the premises are disinfected. The viral epidemic began in Schwalmstadt in the central German state of Hessen, when 150 of the 800 personnel stationed there complained of inflamed and itching eyes. The Bundeswehr closed that base last week. Just 4 days later, the same symptoms cropped up at nearby Neustadt, where all 800 service personnel were told to go home until further notice. With some 14,000 troops stationed in Hesse, German military authorities became alarmed as 2 more bases were ordered closed. "Something is being transmitted between these bases -- food, laundry, books -- something that people touch with their hands and then inadvertently transfer to their eyes," a spokesman said. [View Report](#)
[View Report 2](#)

New HIV Cases Hit Record Levels – Norway

24 February – The Aftenposten reported as many as 230 new cases of [HIV](#) were registered in Norway last year. That's the highest level since registration started in 1985, and health officials are worried. Dr Birgitta Aasjoe of Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen worries that people "have lost interest" in HIV and don't fear it enough anymore. Too many people, she worries, have gone back to having unprotected sex. HIV cases also jumped in 2002, when 205 new cases were registered, up from 158 in 2001. The biggest increases have been among heterosexuals who don't see themselves as at risk. Statistics for other sexually transmitted diseases like chlamydia are also climbing. "That shows that there's a lot of unprotected sex and there are no indications the trend will reverse," Aasjoe told newspaper Aftenposten. [View Article](#)

Nigeria: Muslim Suspicion of Polio Vaccine Lingers on

19 February – IRIN News reported the success of the global effort to eradicate [polio](#) may rest on the outcome of a week-long tour of India, South Africa and Indonesia by a Nigerian delegation which has been conducting tests on polio vaccines used for immunization in Nigeria. The team, which was due to return home on Thursday, comprised health officials nominated by the government and Jama'atu Nasril Islam, an umbrella group of Muslim organizations in Nigeria, and key Muslim leaders. The federal government is hoping this high-powered delegation will give these polio vaccines the all clear. That would help to dispel widespread suspicion in the mainly Muslim north of Nigeria that the vaccines contain anti-fertility agents and the virus that causes AIDS. Many Muslims in the north believe that polio vaccination is being used as a ploy by Western countries to inject people with certain chemicals to reduce their fertility or infect them with HIV/AIDS in order to reduce the population of Muslims.

[View Article](#)

Russia: 27 Students with Unknown Intestinal Infection Hospitalized

20 February – ProMed reported 27 students from the Vladivostok University of Economy and Service were hospitalized. According to the Deputy Chief of the Public Health Administration of Vladivostok, Alla Lahtikova, students were hospitalized because of an unknown intestinal infection. According to physicians, the students are in serious condition. Laboratory tests are being carried out, and the results of the tests will be ready in 3-5 days. The university is currently under quarantine until 24 Feb 2004, and officials of the State Epidemiological Surveillance Center will carry out an investigation.

[View Report](#)

Scotland: Alarming Rise in Mumps among Teenagers in Glasgow

20 February – ProMed reported the city of Glasgow is at the center of an alarming rise in [mumps](#) among teenagers. Confirmed cases of the disease in Scotland have soared to 49 since 1 Dec 2003 -- almost double the tally of 26 cases for the rest of 2003. And 71 percent of these cases were in Glasgow. A report by the Scottish Center for Infection and Environmental Health (SCIEH) said 35 of the 49 cases were within the Greater Glasgow NHS board area, with others in areas adjacent to Greater Glasgow. The potentially-fatal disease can cause meningitis, inflammation of the brain, and infertility in boys. Experts said there had been outbreaks elsewhere in the UK, and there was no specific reason why it had spread to Scotland. Some doctors have hypothesized that this outbreak and similar ones like it elsewhere in the UK are not a result of recent falls in [MMR](#) uptake -- they are affecting the wrong age group for that -- but are as a result of previous vaccination policy. They are occurring in an age group who are too old to have been recommended 2 doses of MMR -- this was introduced in the UK in 1996. Analyses of other similar outbreaks have shown most of the affected children have received MR and either no dose or only one dose of MMR. [View Report](#) [View Report 2](#)

UN Agencies Begin Mass Immunization Scheme against Yellow Fever in Liberia

24 February – AllAfrica.com reported the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will begin a mass immunization campaign later this week to combat an outbreak of [yellow fever](#) in Liberia. WHO's Dr. Luzitu Simao said today from Monrovia, the Liberian capital, that the first immunization teams should start work on Thursday as part of a joint campaign with Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. WHO fears an epidemic is imminent in Liberia, which is trying to recover from 14 years of civil war and lies in West Africa's yellow fever belt. The expected arrival of the annual rainy season in April means the disease may soon find it even easier to flourish. There have been three confirmed cases of yellow

fever so far, with another 11 suspected cases undergoing laboratory analysis in Abidjan in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. The patients in the three confirmed cases have died. [View Article](#)

USCENTCOM

A Dog is a GI's Best Friend - and Vice Versa

20 February – The Arizona Daily Star reported across Iraq and Kuwait, U.S. troops are rescuing beaten, starving and homeless dogs, lavishing them with TLC and crediting the mutts with making their long months at war bearable, even joyful at times. A common refrain from soldiers is that the dogs are the best things that happened to them at war, providing an incalculable morale boost for entire units. At least two dozen soldiers have become so attached to their canine comrades that they have wangled a way to bring them back to America, aided by a remarkable civilian volunteer effort in the United States, Europe and the Middle East that helps with logistics and costs. But the military forbids transporting pets from Iraq, and soldiers now report the brass is cracking down, calling for the enforcement of "General Order One," a long-standing military prohibition against even feeding or caring for animals, much less adopting them. Concern for the safety and health of the troops is the rationale. [View Article](#)

Iraqi Doctors Desperate to Revive Crippled Healthcare System

16 February – The Jordan Times reported doctors desperate to revive their crippled health system are digging in for the long haul after the US overseer in Iraq admitted the coalition had failed to provide proper funds to rescue it from the abyss. Iraq's health system, once among the best in the Middle East, has been brought to its knees by chronic underfunding by former leader Saddam Hussein and crippling UN sanctions imposed after his invasion of Kuwait in 1990. On Saturday, top doctors at a medical conference criticized US overseer Paul Bremer for the "appalling" situation nearly a year after US-led forces removed Saddam. But as the conference continued Sunday, most looked to foreign experts and Iraq's first post-occupation authority — due to take over in four months' time — for answers. The country's 240 public hospitals and 95 per cent of the country's private clinics may have reopened last year, but there are still enormous shortages of nurses, equipment, drugs and beds. The health ministry puts the infant mortality rate at 1.8 in 10, and that of mortality among children under the age of five at 1.31 in 10. [View Article](#)

Mysterious Disease Kills More than 300 Children in Afghanistan

23 February – Reliefweb reported more than 300 children have died of a mysterious disease in Afghanistan's northern province of Badakhshan in less than a month, Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported. The agency quoted the Deputy Governor of the province as saying that it appears to be a respiratory disease, which begins with flu but later chokes the breathing system of the children. Rehman said the number of casualties might be higher but getting exact numbers was difficult in the remote and extremely cold region at the foot of the Hindukush Mountains. The official said the cities of Wakhan, Darwaz, Yaftal and Khwahan, bordering China and Tajikistan, have also been hit by the disease. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Bioterrorist Attack May Result in Mass Mailing of Antibiotics

20 February – CIDRAP News reported under a plan currently being discussed, a major bioterrorist attack could trigger use of the mail system to deliver antibiotics from a national stockpile to homes, the US Postal Service (USPS) announced this week. The proposal calls for the USPS "to deliver antibiotics from the Strategic National Stockpile directly to residential addresses in the event of a catastrophic incident involving a biological agent for which antibiotic use is appropriate," the agency said in a short news release. The Strategic National Stockpile consists of large caches of drugs and other medical supplies stored at 12 secret locations around the country. The stockpile is controlled by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Antibiotics could be used to respond to attacks involving the bacteria that cause [anthrax](#), [plague](#), or [tularemia](#), all of which are considered likely bioterrorist weapons. The USPS said the plan is intended to supplement, not replace, local public health and emergency management efforts in the event of a major incident. "Local public health agencies would also dispense initial and follow-up supplies of antibiotics and relevant information in the affected areas," officials said. The plan is being developed jointly by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), DHS, and the Postal Service. [View Article](#)

E-Mail Alerts Used In STD Fight

20 February – CBS News reported public health officials are using e-mail to try to stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among people who meet through Internet chat rooms and Web sites. In a pilot program in Los Angeles County, health officials use e-mail and the Internet to notify the sex partners of people who had been diagnosed with [STDS](#). San Francisco's Health Department is believed to be the only other agency to use e-mail in this way, said Dr. Pragna Patel of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which released a case study on the Los Angeles County project. In the case study, health officials described a man diagnosed with syphilis in 2002 who said he had 134 male sex partners in a six-month period. County officials sent e-mails to 111 of the partners to alert them that they may have been exposed to an STD. A quarter of those people contacted the health department. [View Article](#)

Interim Guidance for Airline Flight Crews and Persons Meeting Passengers Arriving from Areas with Avian Influenza

18 February – The CDC reported since December 2003, outbreaks of highly pathogenic [avian influenza](#) – mostly influenza A (H5N1) – among chickens and ducks have been reported in several countries in Asia. Human cases also have been reported. No evidence for sustained person-to-person transmission of influenza A(H5N1) has been identified; however, influenza A viruses can change rapidly, and therefore the situation in these countries is being monitored carefully. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and national authorities in Asian countries are working to assess the outbreak, provide support, and assist with control efforts. As part of this response, CDC issues interim recommendations for various prevention and control measures. This interim guidance is intended to assist airline flight crews and personnel meeting arriving passengers in establishing appropriate precautions in the event they must interact with a person suspected of having avian influenza. Recommendations are based on standard infection control practices and on available information on the disease. [View CDC Guidance](#) [Interim Guidance for Protection of Persons Involved in US Avian Influenza Outbreak Disease Control and Eradication Activities](#)

Possible Ebola Exposure Has Researcher in Isolation

19 February – The Baltimore Sun reported a female researcher at Fort Detrick in Frederick, MD may have been exposed to the [Ebola virus](#) last week when she grazed her hand with a needle she was using to inject mice with the virus. The researcher, who was working in the Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, has been staying in an isolation area since the incident Feb. 11, said spokesman Chuck Dasey. She has shown no signs of infection, he said. Medical technicians have been testing blood samples from the researcher for traces of the virus, Dasey said. Fever is also an indication of infection. [View Article](#)

Questions Linger over Pentagon's Use of Multiple, Simultaneous Vaccinations

20 February – Global Security Newswire reported questions persist about possible serious health risks faced by U.S. military personnel who are required to receive multiple, simultaneous vaccinations, some national experts said. The Armed Forces Epidemiological Board met in Florida to review that question and other possible consequences of the vaccine policy, such as the risk of lesser side effects. The review could prompt the board to recommend spreading out military vaccinations over time when possible. The military is evaluating simultaneous vaccinations in response to the April 2003 death of 22-year-old Army Reservist Specialist Rachel Lacy, who was vaccinated against [anthrax](#), [hepatitis B](#), [measles-mumps-rubella](#), [smallpox](#) and [typhoid fever](#) a month earlier as she was preparing for service in Afghanistan. [View Article](#)

US Startled by Extent of West Nile in Blood Donors

23 February – Reuters reported more than 1,000 blood donors have tested positive for [West Nile virus](#) in the United States, making the mosquito-borne disease one of the most common illnesses that can be acquired through transfusions, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. The infected blood had been weeded out of the blood supply by new screening tests introduced in the United States last summer. Two people who received transfusions last summer are known to have contracted West Nile encephalitis, one of the more serious symptoms of the potentially fatal disease. Almost two dozen Americans caught the virus from transfusions in 2002. [View Article](#)

USDA Confirms Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Texas

23 February – USDA reported The U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed that the H5N2 strain of [avian influenza](#) in a flock of chickens in Texas is highly pathogenic avian influenza, the first such case in the United States in 20 years. "The H5 strain can be high or low pathogenic, and the clinical signs observed at the outset of this outbreak suggested that the disease was low path avian influenza," said W. Ron DeHaven, USDA's chief veterinary officer. "However, further testing by our National Veterinary Services laboratory in Ames, Iowa, determined that this strain is highly pathogenic avian influenza." USDA is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to forestall any human health impacts from this outbreak. There is no evidence to date of any human health implications of this HPAI virus in Texas. The premises in Gonzales County, Texas, remains under quarantine, and the flock of approximately 6,608 broiler chickens were depopulated over the weekend. USDA and the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) have started an epidemiological investigation that includes determining the source of the infection and surveillance testing within a 10-mile radius of the infected property. [View Report](#)

USDA Says 90,000 Lbs Beef Recalled on E. Coli Fear

25 February – Reuters reported a California company is recalling about 90,000 pounds of beef distributed to U.S. military bases in Asia and retail stores in Western states because of fears the meat could be contaminated with bacteria, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said. Announcing the action late Tuesday, USDA said Richwood Meat Co. of Merced, California, was conducting the frozen ground beef and beef patty recall after a Japanese laboratory found [E. coli](#) bacteria on some of the meat. The testing was prompted by reports of several recent illnesses in Japan, USDA said. The beef products were produced on Aug. 11, 2003, and distributed to U.S. military installations in the Far East and to stores and institutions in California, Washington, Oregon and Idaho, USDA said. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Australian Drug Effective in Treating Bird Flu

20 February - Reuters reported an Australian-made drug is effective in treating the [avian influenza](#) that has killed at least 22 people in Asia, a government research body said. "Drugs based on CSIRO's research into the influenza virus have been shown to be effective in laboratory tests against a sample of an H5N1 influenza virus currently infecting chickens in Asia," the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) said in a statement. Government scientists tested the ability of Biota's flu drug, Relenza, to inhibit the virus that has also killed millions of wild and farmed birds in Asia. "The tests, used to monitor virus sensitivity to drugs, have shown that the drug Relenza is as effective, in laboratory experiments, against this bird flu as it is against other strains of flu that affect humans," the organization said. [View Article](#)

Death Toll from Indonesia's Dengue Outbreak Rises to 229

23 February – Bloomberg.com reported the death toll from Indonesia's recent [dengue fever](#) outbreak has reportedly climbed over 200. As of 23 February, at least 229 people have been reported dead and over 12,000 infected with the virus. The outbreak has now spread to some 20 of the nation's 32 provinces. The island of Java, where nearly half of country's estimated 231 million people live, has been hit the hardest with 4,184 cases of the disease and at least 47 deaths. [View Article](#) Some experts believe a new virus strain could be responsible for unusually high infection and death rates. [View Article 2](#)

Seven Children Die of Mysterious Disease in Kashmir

22 February – ProMed reported 7 children have been killed by a mysterious disease in 2 far-flung villages of the Ramnagar area of the Udhampur district in Kashmir. The disease is fast spreading, and it is feared it may take the form of an epidemic if remedial measures are not taken. Most of the families affected by the disease are poor and living in remote villages. Health minister of Kashmir Lal Singh told journalists that more and more children are being affected by the mystery disease and admitted to hospitals. The disease has not been diagnosed so far, but its symptoms are similar to those of measles, the minister said. Udhampur's Deputy Commissioner also said that 60 children suffering from the disease have already been hospitalized. Teams of doctors have been rushed to these villages to treat the affected children, he said, adding the causes behind the disease were also being examined to take preventive measures to check its spread. [View Report](#)

Two Thai Cats Die of Bird Flu, PM Urges No Panic

20 February – Reuters reported two domestic cats in Thailand died of the same [avian influenza](#) that has killed 22 people in Asia, scientists said Friday, increasing fears that the virus can move between species as easily as it has between countries. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra urged pet lovers in Thailand, fabled birthplace of the prized, champagne-colored Siamese cat, to stay calm but said they should think twice before feeding stray or domestic animals with potentially infected meat. "Please don't panic," Thaksin told reporters in the capital, Bangkok. "If animals eat raw, infected chicken, they will have no immunity. Please do not feed your animals uncooked chicken." With the human death toll from the virulent H5N1 bird flu virus standing at 22 in Vietnam and Thailand, attention has switched to the number of different species it is able to infect. At present, H5N1 appears to spread easily only among birds, but health experts fear it might mate with another animal or human flu virus to produce a highly contagious and deadly variant that could unleash a global human flu pandemic. [View Article](#)

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Guatemala: Outbreak of Diarrheic Rotavirus Disease

24 February – ProMed reported over the past few weeks, Guatemala has reported to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) the existence of an outbreak of diarrheic disease. The outbreak began in January 2004; based on information dated 31 Jan 2004, it has affected 28,255 people, of whom 17,032 are under 5 years of age. Laboratory analyses carried out both in hospitals and by the various areas of the Ministry of Health, as well as the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security have identified [rotavirus](#) in 15-60 percent of the samples taken. The outbreak has affected above all the health districts of Ixcán, Peten Sur Oriente, and Escuintla, but has also spread to Guatemala, Sacatepequez, Suchitepequez, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos, El Progreso, and Zacapa. Prevention and control measures have been taken with regard to strengthening surveillance of detected cases, identifying risk groups, and increasing awareness among health-care professionals at all levels with a view to the early detection and proper treatment of diarrheic syndrome and dehydration. In addition, there has been a review and strengthening of more structural aspects such as intra- and intersectoral coordination, internal and mass communication, and the existence of contingency plans as well as of medicines and other supplies necessary to respond to this type of emergency. [View Report](#)

Jamaica: Outbreak of Rotavirus Infection in Montego Bay

22 February – ProMed reported a severe outbreak of intestinal [rotavirus](#) infection has claimed 2 lives and is threatening hundreds of others in western Jamaica, mostly children, officials said. Most of the cases are in the resort town of Montego Bay and the 2 who victims died have been afflicted with gastroenteritis, a severe form of diarrhea often caused by rotavirus infection. Both of the deaths occurred in Montego Bay; one was an adult and one was a child. The latest report shows that 1350 people have contracted the virus since the outbreak began more than a month ago, with children under age 5 accounting for 935 cases. [View Report](#)

Jamaica: Typhoid in Westmoreland

19 February – ProMed reported the Western Regional Health Authority is trying to track down the original carrier of the latest case of [typhoid fever](#) to hit Westmoreland, leaving a small child, his 15-year-old mother, and another 37-year-old female in the same household infected. In addition to the 3 confirmed cases, 2 other persons suspected of having the disease have been hospitalized. According to epidemiologist for the Western Regional Health Authority Dr Janice Alexander, while other

members of the household and family are being investigated, public health officials are actively searching for the original carrier of the disease, as they are not convinced that any one of the infected persons is the original carriers. Yesterday, councilor for the North Savanna-la-mar division, Devon Thomas, said the area in which the disease was detected this time recently had a number of toilets demolished by the Ministry of Water and Housing during infrastructural upgrading work. He said that while some of the residents had their toilets restored, others had not. [View Report](#)

Red Cross to Send More Medical Staff to Haiti

23 February – Reliefweb reported the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it would send reinforcements to Haiti to staff hospitals where incursions by armed insurgents have been reported during the ongoing insurrection. "We are in the process of sending in much more staff", Yves Giovannoni, head of ICRC operations for Latin America and the Caribbean, said. He said international Red Cross non-local staff, which currently numbers 11, would be doubled. Earlier this month, the ICRC said many medical facilities were grinding to a halt in Haiti because staff feared for their own safety, while victims of violence were scared of visiting hospitals and not being cared for. Giovannoni, speaking to journalists after returning from Haiti, said two additional medical teams would be sent to the capital Port-au-Prince and to Gonaives, the northwestern town which has fallen under insurgent control. [View Article](#)

Please contact the below-listed POC for suggested improvements and/or comments regarding this report. This report is also available on the USACHPPM website at <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/Hiupdate/>.

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